George gave a talk on the 148-year history and the future of the Hope Entomological Collections, the second largest insect collection in Britain. Highlights of the talk included images of Dr Livingstone's tsetse fly and the oldest pinned insect in the World – Dale's Bath white.

Beetles at the Natural History Museum: Max Barclay, Curator of Coleoptera, Department of Entomology, The Natural History Museum, London.

An introduction to the collections of the Natural History Museum, London one of the largest collections of beetles in the world. Max gave an account of the history of the collection and some of the associated famous figures and went on to introduce current aspects of the collections and their management and development.

From collection to the web: Mike Wilson, National Museum of Wales.

Digital imaging is transforming the use of museum collections. An example from a project to image the world 'sharpshooter' leafhoppers was discussed. This talk showed both the value of collections and their digitisation, especially in making these valuable resources available to all. Mike, did however, point out that images are no substitute for specimens.

World Museum Liverpool: Guy Knight, Zoology Curator, World Museum Liverpool.

Guy spoke of the history of the collections from their early start to the damage caused during WWII, and the remit of the museum to both house and display their collections. The recent refurbishment of the entomology department had at its core access to collections by both the general public and amateur entomologists.

View from the Outside: Mark Telfer.

The 'amateurs' view on Museum collections. Mark's talk highlighted some of the advantages and disadvantages of using a museum collection, with some valuable remarks on 'how to use a museum collection' and on the pitfalls that you can encounter. Comments made on the poor level of identification within some beetle groups in museum collections provoked some discussion later by curators.

Museum standard specimen preservation: Darren J. Mann, Collections Manager, Hope Entomological Collections.

The reputed oldest pinned insect in the World is 304 years old; this specimen has lasted for such a time through curatorial care. Museum standard practices for specimen preparation and preservation, such as type of pin, labelling card and mounting agents are critical for the longevity of insect specimens. Darren gave examples of both good and bad specimen preservation, and how non-professionals could achieve the same standards as museums.

A brief discussion followed the talks, after which members were invited on a guided tour of the Hope Entomological Collections.

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

The naming of the Harlequin ladybird, *Harmonia axyridis* (Pallas) (Coleoptera: Coccinellidae).– I was very pleased to read John Muggleton's recent, fascinating speculation on the etymology of *Harmonia axyridis* (Muggleton, 2006). This ladybird, which arrived in Britain in 2004 (Majerus *et al.*, 2006), is known in Britain by the common name, the harlequin ladybird. Elsewhere in the English speaking world, the species has a wide variety of names. In half-an-hour, a search on the web came up with 13 names (Asian ladybird beetle, Asian ladybug, Halloween ladybug, Hallowe'en ladybug, Halloween lady beetle, Japanese ladybug, Multivariate ladybug,

Multicolored/multicoloured ladybug, Multicolored Asian lady beetle, Multicolored Asian ladybug beetle, Multicolor Asian Lady Beetle, Southern beetle, Two-spot lady beetle), in addition to variations on harlequin, and I am sure this list is not exhaustive.

When the species was first recorded in Britain, I had to decide on a common name for this species for a press release. Searching through the common names available, I decided that the name harlequin ladybird was the most appropriate. I had one major positive reason for this choice, and a number of minor negative reasons. The positive reason is that the nominate form of this species (*H. axyridis* f. *axyridis*) has a chequered-patterned appearance, much like the pattern on the costume of Harlequin in the Divine Comedy, although the white and black of the costume are replaced by orange or red and black in the ladybird.

The rejection of some of the other names that had previously been used were of minor moment, but may be of some interest. The use of Japanese or Asian in the name was rejected because although *H. axyridis* originates in Asia, those that arrived in Britain came from continental Europe, and also, as we now know, from Canada (Majerus *et al.*, 2006). The use of multicoloured was rejected owing to some ambiguity in the name as it may be understood as many colours occurring on the same individuals. The name Halloween ladybug was rejected as I suspected at the time (September 2004) that these ladybirds would not be active in late October in Britain. My reason for believing this was that by early October, most native species of ladybird in Britain have retired to their overwintering sites. (On the basis of observations in 2004 and 2005, my view that *H. axyridis* would not still be active at the end of October is erroneous). The name Two-spot lady beetle was rejected because we already have a two-spot, while the name Southern beetle simply seemed inappropriate.

I was thus left with either the multivariate ladybird or the harlequin ladybird. I opted for the latter because of the colour pattern of the nominate form and because the name seemed more appealing and memorable: important considerations in the context of my intention to engage the press and public in a survey of this invasive alien species.

While I had the pleasure, in 1985, of giving common names to most of the British coccinellids that have the appearance of ladybirds, I cannot claim to have re-christened *H. axyridis*. The name harlequin has previously been used for this beetle in North America. I first read it in a newspaper article on how *H. axyridis* invades homes in the United States in 1995.

For information, records of the harlequin ladybird increased more than ten-fold in the period October–December 2005, when compared to the same period in 2004. Moreover, the distribution has expanded considerably over this period, with the species moving about 80 km to the west and north from its December 2004 distribution. As Dr Muggleton says, it will be interesting to see the further progress of the harlequin. – MICHAEL E. N. MAJERUS, Department of Genetics, Downing Street, Cambridge, CB2 3EH, e-mail: m.majerus@gen.cam.ac.uk

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